In the Claims

1-6. (Canceled)

7. (Original) A method for enabling graphic-based linking to the internet, comprising:

    receiving digital data corresponding to a graphic image;

    steganographically encoding the graphic image to hide plural bit address information therein; and

    distributing the encoded graphic image data to users, who can decode the address information therefrom and use same in establishing a link to the internet.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7 in which the graphic image conveys said plural-bit address information notwithstanding transformation into or out of digital form.

9. (Original) The method of claim 7 in which the address information is not recognizable as such to human viewers of a rendered version of the encoded graphic.

10. (Original) The method of claim 7 in which the address information comprises a URL.

11. (Original) The method of claim 7 in which the address information comprises an index to a remote data structure, the remote data structure having a corresponding URL address stored therein.

12. (Original) The method of claim 7 in which the encoded graphic conveys said address information notwithstanding transformation into or out of digital form.

13. (Original) The method of claim 7 in which the graphic comprises a photographic image.

14. (Previously Presented) A computer readable storage medium having stored thereon a graphic encoded according to claim 7.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7 in which the graphic is a color image, rather than a grayscale image.

16. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 7 in which~~ A method for enabling graphic-based linking to the internet, comprising:

receiving digital data corresponding to a graphic image;

steganographically encoding the graphic image to hide plural bit address information therein; and

distributing the encoded graphic image data to users, who can decode the address information therefrom and use same in establishing a link to the internet;

wherein the steganographic encoding is adapted in strength in accordance with local characteristics of the graphic image, said adaptation comprising more than two different strengths.

17. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 7 in which~~ A method for enabling graphic-based linking to the internet, comprising:

receiving digital data corresponding to a graphic image;

steganographically encoding the graphic image to hide plural bit address information therein; and

distributing the encoded graphic image data to users, who can decode the address information therefrom and use same in establishing a link to the internet;

wherein said distributing comprises distributing the encoded graphic image data in digital, rather than hardcopy form.

18. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 7~~ A method for enabling graphic-based linking to the internet, comprising:

receiving digital data corresponding to a graphic image;

steganographically encoding the graphic image to hide plural bit address information therein; and

distributing the encoded graphic image data to users, who can decode the address information therefrom and use same in establishing a link to the internet;

wherein the plural-bit address information is encoded redundantly through the graphic image, wherein all of said plural bits can be recovered both from first and second non-overlapping excerpts of said image.

19. (Previously Presented) A method of initiating access to a computer via a data communications medium, the method comprising:

receiving artwork corresponding to an object to be printed, the artwork including text and background;

steganographically embedding into at least the background of said artwork certain information indicative of an address associated with said computer; and

printing said object using the artwork into which said information has been steganographically embedded.

20. (Previously Presented) A physical object printed on a substrate and including text and background, at least the background having a plural-bit code steganographically embedded therein, said code being an index to a data structure that specifies address information of a computer resource that is to be associated with said object.

21. (Previously Presented) The object of claim 20 wherein said data structure is maintained on a computer separate from the computer whose address information is to be associated with the object.

22. (New) A method for graphic-based linking to a computer address, comprising:

receiving digital data at a user's computer, the data corresponding to a graphic image;

using plural-bit index data steganographically decoded from said graphic image digital data to index a database;

obtaining from said database a URL address corresponding to said plural-bit index data;

establishing a link to said URL address; and

presenting a screen display on the user's computer in accordance with information obtained from said URL address.

23. (New) A method of initiating access to a computer via a data communications medium, the method comprising:

providing first data indicative of an address associated with the computer;

steganographically embedding the first data in a second object comprising visual data, said embedding occurring in-band within said visual data, rather than in a part of said second object not intended for presentation to a user;

decoding from the second object the steganographically embedded first data; and

initiating a link to the computer using the first data.

24. (New) The method of claim 23 wherein the first data comprises a URL address.

25. (New) The method of claim 23 wherein the first data comprises an index number for use in accessing a data base.

26. (New) The method of claim 23 that includes performing said decoding and initiating in the same device.

27. (New) The method of claim 23 in which the second object is in digital form, and is not rendered into human-perceptible form between said embedding and decoding.

28. (New) The method of claim 23 that includes distributing the second object to at least certain members of the public between said embedding and decoding.

29. (New) A method of initiating access to a computer via a data communications medium, the method comprising:

providing first data indicative of an address associated with the computer;

steganographically embedding the first data in a second object comprising visual data, said embedding extending generally throughout a sampled representation of said second object, rather than localized in a particular portion thereof, wherein the complete first data can be recovered from an excerpt of said second object and used to initiate a link to the computer.

30. (New) The method of claim 29 in which the second object is represented by plural samples, and said embedding changes a majority of said samples.

31. (New) The method of claim 29 in which the second object is represented by plural samples, and the embedding is relatively weaker in regions where it might more readily be perceived.